the ACTION reporter

American Council To Improve Our Neighborhoods

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Help of Experts Asked In Reducing Urban Stresses

The urgent need for action by both urban renewal and mental health experts to relieve the mounting stresses of urban living was brought out at national and international conferences last month.

James E. Lash, executive vice president of ACTION, keynoter of the discussion on "Community Action for Mental Health" at the 1957 National Health Forum in Cincinnati, Ohio, told delegates "We seek to eliminate a major cause of the hopelessness which . . . is at the root of much of the bad mental health these days.

"We feel certain that the hectic kind of life our cities have forced upon us can be changed; that . . . debilitating influences affecting the health and well-being of the people can be removed."

The local efforts and advice of people in the health field — mental and physical alike are "essential" to replanning and renewing the urban environment better to serve humanity, he said.

The stress of urban living also was the focus of a meeting held under the auspices of the World Federation of Mental Health at the United Nations headquarters.

Dr. Margaret Mead, president of the Federation, stated that "a new conception of city living, based upon far more extensive individual participation in community life" was needed to help the increased number of city residents cope with changing patterns and achieve a saner life.

Dr. Carl Feiss, planning consultant, asked those in the field of mental health to tell his associates and himself what city planners need to know about people and their requirements.

Group Correspondents Program Mushrooms

We now have 472 Correspondents — 170 more than a month ago — biggest monthly increase to date!

In case you haven't yet, be sure to send ACTION the name of your Group Correspondent so you can receive bonus mailings, up to 15 copies of the newsletter and other special benefits.

Midwest ACTION Clinic Draws 217 From 68 Cities in 17 States

Hardy Reports on "Living Future" Tour

A growing civic awareness, similar basic problems, attitudes and needs, exist in city after city across the country, reports David Keith Hardy, narrator of "Our Living Future."

"After 33,000 miles of travel since September, presenting 'Our Living Future' in 70 cities in 16 states from coast to coast, I have found common denominators in communities ranging from 4,000 population to the great cities of more than a million," he said.

Mr. Hardy will report his observations to ACTION's Board of Directors at its

Reporting to Andrew Heiskell, Chairman of ACTION's Board, (r.) and James E. Lash, executive vice president of ACTION, (l.) is the narrator of "Our Living Future," David Keith Hardy.

quarterly meeting in New York this month. "Our Living Future" is the dramatic film and lecture presentation, sponsored by ACTION and contributed as a public service by LIFE magazine, which has been touring the country to help communities rally local forces against their blight and slums. The show will appear in 36 more midwestern, southern and eastern cities before its 1956-7 tour ends in June.

"Some of the first things I look for — and all too often find — on entering a town," Mr. Hardy says, "are slums of today — or tomorrow; a rundown business district; inadequate sanitation; shortage of parks and playgrounds; civic leadership at

(See "Living Future" page 4)

Marked Interest Shown in "How-to" of Renewal

A notable advance in the determination of city officials and citizen leaders to get going on urban renewal programs was evident at the two-day Midwest Urban Renewal Clinic ACTION held in Dayton, Ohio, March 14-15.

Noting this development, ACTION's Educational Program director, Leo Molinaro, who directed the Clinic, said that "Where six months ago, many local officials and business leaders had to be convinced about their city's need for urban renewal, today they are asking 'How do we get it done?' "

Other evidence of this growing interest was the fact that the Clinic drew participants from 17 states, although invitations were only sent to an 11-state area. Among the 217 participants from 68 communities were representatives from such widespread points as Hartford, Conn. and Fargo, North Dakota.

Balanced attendance between citizen and business groups and urban renewal and municipal officials indicated the conviction that renewal is a partnership job, Mr. Molinaro said, while extensive coverage of the Clinic by newspapers, radio and TV stations in Dayton demonstrated that urban renewal is news.

Papers Cite Business Participation

Both Dayton newspapers, editorializing on the Clinic, stressed the significance of participation by top business executives at the meeting and on ACTION's Board.

The fact that Andrew Heiskell, publisher of LIFE and ACTION Board chairman, and Roy W. Johnson, executive vice president of General Electric and an ACTION director, are devoting their valuable time and ability to this cause "is evidence that slum clearance programs cannot be brushed off as 'long-haired idealism,' " said the *Journal Herald*.

Citing this participation, the *News* declared that "Those who fail to join the search for anti-blight measures with the hope that they will not be affected by the

(See "Clinic" page 2)

ORGANIZATIONS IN RENEWAL

Below is another statement by a national organization whose activities bear on urban renewal, outlining its program, aims and resources available to local groups working for neighborhood and community improvement:

Keep America Beautiful, Inc. is the national public service organization concerned with the prevention of litter. Founded in 1953, it is supported by a group of leading national business firms, trade associations and labor unions representing some 50 major industrial categories.

The KAB anti-litter program is guided by a National Advisory Council of over 40 national civic and public interest organizations (including ACTION) and four Federal departments, who are working for a coordinated educational effort to preserve and improve America's scenic beauty.

KAB emphasizes the voluntary efforts of individuals and groups, working in close cooperation with local officials, as one of the primary means of achieving its program. It encourages the organization locally of community-wide clean-up and beautification projects to promote awareness of the individual's responsibility for litter, and to assist in the prevention and elimination of litter in urban and rural areas.

Noting the affinity between litter prevention and urban renewal goals, KAB points out that concentrations of litter in urban alleys and back lots are often symptomatic of "neighborhood decay." Further, urban leaders who are initially aroused over immediate litter problems soon develop a broader concern for neighborhood improvement.

Coordination with Renewal Programs

The coordination of local litter-prevention activities with a community's urban renewal program is encouraged by Keep America Beautiful.

The American Municipal Association at its national convention in November adopted a resolution supporting the KAB aims and encouraging its individual members to appoint "an interdepartmental committee of appropriate municipal government officials to cooperate closely with a permanent volunteer, non-partisan, nonprofit [privately-financed] citizens committee of responsible and representative civic leaders to keep their municipality clean, healthy, safe and beautiful." KAB points out that this kind of coordinated community action provides a framework for many other civic programs, including urban renewal.

KAB has developed a series of Lesson Plans for elementary schools, based on a teacher's handbook, "Annie Doesn't Litter Anymore." For community leaders, it provides a series of "How-To-Do-It" guides outlining more than 20 specific projects for various size communities. The bi-monthly KAB Newsletter and other publications are also available free.

For further information, write to Community and State Activities Section, Keep America Beautiful, Inc. 99 Park Avenue, New York 16, N. Y.

Women's Clubs Encourage Neighborhood Projects

Metropolitan-area clubs entering the 1957 Community Achievement Contest of the General Federation of Women's Clubs are being urged to consider neighborhood projects "to develop citizen participation and support in voluntary rehabilitation and conservation programs."

In an article titled "A Challenge to Action," appearing in the March *General Federation Clubwoman*, contest director Mildred White Wells calls members' attention to the crisis developing in many American cities and towns, and the resources available from the Federal government as well as ACTION to help local groups meet these problems. Consultation with city officials on long-range plans for community improvement is also recommended.

Clinic

(Continued from page 1)

process of decadence may be labeled as the sentimental dreamers."

Mr. Johnson told some 300 mayors, city managers, planners, civic officials and citizen leaders at the opening session that cities must "mobilize all their talents and resources" to do the job. "There must be a cross-section of community interest represented in leadership" of urban renewal and "differences — no matter how long standing or how deep-rooted — must be laid aside in the common cause."

Advocating that business stop regarding planning as "something exclusively for the long-hairs," Mr. Heiskell told the opening luncheon session that "planning is really a case of scheduling the inevitable."

Businessmen must provide major leadership in urban renewal "or foot most of the bill in the certain bankruptcy facing communities which fail to revitalize themselves," he said.

ACTION's program for aiding local communities was outlined at the closing session by James E. Lash, executive vice president, who reported that ACTION has established direct and continuing contact with some 1,100 local organizations interested in urban renewal.

Citizens To Discuss Roads and Planning

The far-reaching impact of the Federal highway program on two major urban problems — Main Street's development and metropolitan growth — will be the focus of national conferences for citizen leaders scheduled for the coming months.

"Main Street, 1969" is the theme for the 1957 National Citizens Planning Conference to be held in Little Rock, Ark., by the American Planning and Civic Association, from June 9-12. Winthrop Rockefeller, chairman of the Arkansas Industrial Development Commission, is chairman of the conference.

Using the terminal date of the road-building program as its target, the conference will consider the program's impact on business, commercial, industrial and regional development. Further information may be obtained from James E. Hatcher, Conference Director, Metropolitan Planning Commission, 209½ West Second Street, Little Rock, Ark.

From September 9-12, a national symposium dealing with the challenge the highway program offers to improve metropolitan areas will be sponsored by the Connecticut General Life Insurance Company. A major aim of the symposium is to help develop the informed public which is needed to see that the $50-billion program most effectively increases our cities' livability.

For further information, write to Ned Chase, Cunningham & Walsh, 260 Madison Avenue, New York, N. Y.

The High Cost of Slums

Need some factual ammunition to back up your fight against slums?

Here are national averages, compiled by the Federal Works Agency, to show what the social, moral and economic cost of slums is to our cities:

Slums & Blighted Districts:
Comprise about 20% of a city's residential areas . . . but . . .

They Account for:
33% of the **Population**
45% of the **Major Crimes**
55% of the **Juvenile Delinquency**
50% of the **Arrests**
60% of the **T. B. Victims**
50% of the **Disease**
35% of the **Fires**

This means that they swallow almost half of every tax dollar — 45% of the **City Service Costs, but** — despite this tremendous drain from so limited an area they return only
6% of the **Tax Revenues!**

Do you know how your community compares with these national averages?

Vacant Lot Clean-Ups: Eyesores Into Assets

With spring officially here, and several nation-wide clean-up campaigns giving impetus to local beautification drives, the question of how to deal with messy vacant lots which spoil a neighborhood's looks and menace its health and safety is timely.

This problem is one of the most frequently mentioned in letters to ACTION. While methods will differ from one neighborhood to another, and law enforcement is sometimes the only solution, the various citizen action programs reported below may suggest a way to solve your vacant lots problem and turn these eyesores into neighborhood assets.

Oklahoma City, Okla.—A unique one-woman Citizens' Service, set up in City Hall three years ago to help residents and property owners clean up vacant lots through voluntary efforts, has proved remarkably effective in this community.

Families in this new Oklahoma City area beautified a barren lot with help from Citizens' Service and the developer.

The service has resulted in over 1,300 weed-grown lots being mowed and cleaned of trash and the demolition or up-grading of close to 400 sub-standard dwelling units — without resort to official action, and with minimum official expense. Further, some of the lots have blossomed into grassy playgrounds, a teen-agers' recreation area or neighborhood meeting place.

Mrs. Mercedes Wood, who was hired by the city to act as the citizen's agent "by following through on his complaints and supplying him with accurate information about his city government," hit on the way to get lots cleaned without municipal legal or taxing authority.

Her solution: enlist the voluntary cooperation of property owners by calling, or, if they were out of town, writing to them, telling them the story, and asking their help in getting lots mowed and cleaned.

Citizens who call are asked to check the ownership of the vacant lot in question with the county recorder's office, and let Mrs. Wood know whose it is. To help property owners get their weeds cut, she has located several reliable mower operators who can do the job for them. There have been few refusals or repeat offenders.

During its annual spring clean-up campaign, the Junior Chamber of Commerce writes letters of appreciation to all owners who cooperated the previous year, thus engendering early voluntary action.

The superintendent of the Building Department, Roy Mullinex, adapted the idea to clearing neighborhoods of dilapidated structures, got the same kind of response.

"We are selling safety and property value preservation," he says. "This direct approach to an individual appears to be particularly effective in our city."

Neighborly Visit

Newark — Two busloads of 80 neighborhood leaders, organization representatives and city officials took an all-day trip to Philadelphia, 85 miles away, to study blight-fighting techniques in that city at first hand.

In the above photograph, Charles Liddell, executive director of the Germantown Settlement House, shows visitors results of rehabilitation through code enforcement plus voluntary action in one of his city's four leadership areas. To his left are Mrs. R. Neal Owens, president of the Associated Community Councils of Newark, and Miss Agnes Coleman, chairman of the Newark Commission for Neighborhood Conservation and Rehabilitation.

The tour was financed out of funds collected at Newark's showing of "Our Living Future."

Cicero, Ill. — Cleaning up the town is part of the long-range city improvement drive of the Cicero ACTION Committee.

Cooperating with the Cicero Fire Prevention Bureau and Public Works Department in "the greatest one-day clean-up effort in the city's history," the committee helped man 50 trucks—many of them loaned by local business and industrial firms—to clean up the city's 1,100 blocks.

Over 90 sorties were made by junk-laden trucks in Cicero's one-day clean-up of lots, alleys and yards.

The event, which recently won first prize for fire prevention in the Chicago area, is part of a broader program which includes removal or rehabilitation of deteriorating buildings, a housing canvass by high school students, stronger codes, hiring of a professional planner, and an all-out information program.

Robert Thomas, public relations director of the Hotpoint Company, is chairman of the Cicero ACTION Committee, which developed from the General Electric-ACTION cooperative program.

Baltimore — School children participating in the annual Clean-Up, Fix-Up Campaign sponsored by Citizens Planning and Housing Association and the Department of Education have cleaned up lots, converted them into gardens and tot-lots.

School #125 turned a debris-laden city-owned lot which threatened the neighborhood's safety into a playground, with colorful murals and seasonal flowers. A neighboring landlord supplied a metal fence, then rehabilitated his slum houses next-door.

Chicago — Volunteers working with the Midwest Community Council and the East Garfield Park Conservation Advisory Committee surveyed vacant lots, sought owners' permission to put playground equipment on the space.

Reading for renewal

National Publications

"She's Proved That Beauty Breeds Beauty," by Lois Mattox Miller, READER'S DIGEST, April, 1957, pp. 203-7, tells about a neighborhood beautification campaign, inspired by that vital ingredient — a determined citizen leader, which transformed the appearance as well as the spirit of a run-down residential section of Philadelphia.

"A B C's of Urban Renewal," published by Sears, Roebuck and Company to assist its store managers and other company executives contribute most effectively toward local urban renewal activities, offers basic material for any citizen leader. The illustrated booklet deals with the terms and techniques used in fighting slums and blight. Included is a letter from Sears' Board Chairman and President to its executives telling why urban renewal is a major company program.
(24 pp. Copies available free from Urban Renewal Division, Sears, Roebuck and Co., Executive Offices, Chicago 7, Ill.)

Speeches and Reprints

"Urban Renewal — A New Frontier," an address by Roy W. Johnson, executive vice president, General Electric Company, and ACTION Board Member.

"The Businessman's Stake in Urban Renewal," an address by Andrew Heiskell, publisher of LIFE Magazine, and chairman of the ACTION Board.

These two headline-making speeches, delivered at the Midwest Urban Renewal Clinic conducted by ACTION in Dayton, Ohio, present the significant facts about urban growth and decay which compel business to take a leadership role in renewal programs. They will provide useful material for citizens who wish to speak on one of the most vital topics of our day, and for officials who seek broader business support for local renewal programs.
(Available free from ACTION.)

"Urban Renewal and Your City's Arterial Route Planning Job," by L. Perry Cookingham, City Manager, Kansas City, Mo., appeared in *Street Engineering* magazine, February, 1957, and was reprinted by ACTION so that this vital message on the relationship between urban renewal and the Federal highway program might have wide circulation among public officials, business leaders and other citizens.
(Available free from ACTION.)

CORRESPONDENTS' SWAP-SHOP

"How's Your Housing?" was prepared by the Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council, with city departments, to acquaint Chicagoans with the city's new housing code and encourage voluntary compliance. A checklist covering the main minimum requirements, the one-page flyer was first distributed at a luncheon to introduce the code to realtors, lawyers, and city and neighborhood organizations. The *Daily News* reprinted it and Sears, Roebuck and Company bought 200,000 copies to be distributed throughout the city by store managers, community groups and the Building Department.
(Available free from Metropolitan Housing and Planning Council, 69 W. Washington St., Chicago, Ill.)

"Living Future"

(Continued from page 1)

sixes and sevens; problems of taxation affecting the metropolitan area."

At the same time, he noted, "I have found a growing civic awareness and striving for answers to these problems, an anxiety to transform the years of words into deeds through planning, organization and education."

Among the fundamental needs which Mr. Hardy cited as reappearing in city after city, in different form and with different emphasis, were the need for metropolitan thinking, state enabling legislation, adequate planning staff backed up by a realistic budget and strong planning commission, an effective citizens group, bold political leadership, an alert and knowledgeable press, rejuvenation of downtown areas, a consideration of esthetics, and improvement of housing conditions.

The cities where "Our Living Future" will be presented during the next six weeks are:

April	1	Springfield, Illinois
	2	Decatur, Illinois
	5	Champaign-Urbana, Illinois
	8	Peoria, Illinois
	10	Joliet, Illinois
	11	Rockford, Illinois
	12	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
	15	Minneapolis, Minnesota
	16	St. Paul, Minnesota
	22	Green Bay, Wisconsin
	23	Madison, Wisconsin
	24	Kenosha, Wisconsin
	25	Chicago, Illinois
May	1	Tulsa, Oklahoma
	3	Oklahoma City, Okla.
	6	Dallas, Texas
	7	Austin, Texas
	8	Houston, Texas
	9	Beaumont, Texas

The rest of the cities where "Our Living Future" will appear during its 1956-7 tour will be announced in the May "ACTION Reporter."

ACTION
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